Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities 4(3)(2025) 2054-2069

Research in Management and Humanities

DWIJMH VOL. 4 NO. 3 (2025) ISSN: 2980-4817

Available online at www.dwijmh.org
Journal homepage: http://www.dwijmh.org
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6884-3504

Managing work-life balance among elementary school teachers in the era of digital education: Challenges and strategies

Agnes Joy S. Sumagit: Student, Graduate School of Education, Divine Word College of Laoag, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines

ARTICLEINFO

Article history:
Received: June 25, 2025
Received in rev. form. July 15, 2025
Accepted: August 20, 2025
Published: September 10, 2025

Keywords: ***Work-life balance, digital education, coping strategies, teacher well-being, elementary school teachers***

ABSTRACT

This study determined the challenges and strategies of elementary school teachers in rural schools within the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur in managing work-life balance in the era of digital education. Using descriptive phenomenology, the lived experiences of elementary school teachers were explored through online open-ended interview questionnaires. Thematic analysis revealed several key challenges: blurred boundaries between work and personal life, psychological and emotional stress, technological difficulties, and excessive workload. In response, teachers adopted coping strategies such as effective time management, setting boundaries between work and personal life, seeking family support, and practicing self-care and stress management activities. The findings underscore the urgent need for policy interventions and institutional support systems that promote sustainable digital teaching practices while safeguarding the holistic welfare of educators.

© 2025 by the authors. Licensee DWIJMH. This open-access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

JEL Classification: I21

Introduction

In recent years, the integration of digital education has transformed the teaching profession worldwide, including in the Philippines. The rapid shift towards online and blended learning modalities, accelerated by technological advancements and educational reforms, has redefined teachers' work structures and responsibilities. Elementary school teachers are expected to prepare interactive materials, manage virtual classrooms, conduct assessments online, and provide continuous feedback to students and parents, often extending their working hours beyond traditional school schedules.

These additional demands blur the boundaries between work and personal life, posing significant challenges in maintaining work-life balance. Teachers face increased stress, fatigue, and reduced

* *Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6884-3504*
© 2025 by the authors. Hosting by DWIJMH. Peer review under responsibility of Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities.

personal time, which can negatively affect their well-being, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness (Kim et al., 2022). Kim, Oxley, and Asbury (2022) noted that teachers often feel like their minds are overloaded due to constant multitasking between online teaching, administrative work, and household duties. Such conditions pose risks to teachers' mental health, leading to negative emotions such as fatigue, anxiety, and stress, ultimately resulting in their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance (Singh et al., 2024).

Moreover, the lack of adequate training in digital technologies has compounded these challenges. Kaliisa and Picard (2017) emphasize that without proper professional development, teachers struggle to integrate technology effectively, increasing their preparation time and stress levels. In the Philippine setting, teachers also face infrastructural limitations, such as unreliable internet connectivity and lack of access to appropriate devices, further complicating the delivery of online education (Kunjiapu et al., 2025).

Despite growing research on digital education and teacher stress, there remains a gap in understanding how elementary school teachers—especially those in diverse or rural contexts—navigate work-life balance in the digital age. This gap in the literature highlights the need for deeper exploration into how digital education has affected the work-life balance of elementary educators, particularly in rural public schools where access to technology and support is often limited.

This study sought to fill that gap by exploring the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in rural areas within the Schools Divisions of Ilocos Sur as they manage work-life balance amidst the demands of digital education. Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, it aims to identify the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ. The findings will provide insights that can inform supportive policies and practices tailored to the needs of teachers in a digitally-driven learning environment.

Review of related literature

This review of related literature provides a comprehensive understanding of previous studies, theories and findings relevant to managing work-life balance among elementary school teachers in the era of digital education.

Work-life balance in the teaching profession

Work-life balance in the teaching profession refers to the ability of educators to effectively manage the demands of their professional roles alongside their personal and family responsibilities (Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011). Teachers frequently encounter high workloads that extend beyond classroom hours, including lesson planning, grading, administrative duties, and extracurricular involvement, which can impinge on their personal time and lead to negative impact on teacher's well-being such as stress, physical and mental health condition, burnout and uncertainty. (Wahab et al., 2024). Studies highlight that without sufficient balance, teachers' job satisfaction and mental health can deteriorate, impacting their overall effectiveness in the classroom.

The increasing complexity of teaching roles, especially in elementary education, intensifies the challenge of maintaining work-life balance. Tarraya, H. (2023) found that Filipino elementary teachers often manage not only academic tasks but also community-related responsibilities, which extend their working hours and contribute to work-life conflict. Additionally, the emotional labour inherent in teaching—managing students' emotional and behavioral needs—adds another layer of stress that affects teachers' psychological well-being (Kinman et al., 2011).

Recent advancements in digital education have further complicated teachers' work-life balance. The transition to blended and online learning demands technological adaptation, often requiring teachers to be available beyond traditional school hours (König, Jäger-Biela, & Glutsch, 2020). Lapada et al. (2020) reported that Filipino teachers experience "digital overload," where constant connectivity creates blurred boundaries between work and home life, exacerbating stress and reducing opportunities for rest.

To mitigate these challenges, research underscores the importance of organizational and policy support to foster a healthier work-life balance among teachers. Kinman et al. (2011) advocate for manageable workloads, supportive leadership, and professional autonomy as key factors in reducing burnout. Moreover, Herman et al. (2018) emphasized that school-based mental health programs and professional development on stress management enhance teacher resilience and instructional effectiveness, supporting long-term retention.

Impact of digital education on teachers' work-life balance

The integration of digital technologies into education has substantially reshaped teaching roles and responsibilities, with profound implications for teachers' work-life balance. As König, Jäger-Biela, and Glutsch (2020) observed, the use of digital platforms requires additional skills and considerable time investment, extending teachers' workload beyond conventional classroom hours. Tasks such as responding to emails, updating digital materials, and interacting with students outside of scheduled teaching increasingly blur the boundary between professional and personal life.

Digital education also demands continuous adaptation to emerging technologies, instructional design, and assessment methods. Trust and Whalen (2020) emphasized that these requirements place additional cognitive and temporal burdens on teachers, contributing to work intensification and role overload as they strive to keep pace with innovation while maintaining instructional quality. When left unaddressed, such pressures may undermine psychological health, a concern underscored by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018), who stressed the necessity of supportive working conditions.

Beyond workload, the very nature of constant digital connectivity generates additional challenges. Tarafdar et al. (2017) described this as "technostress," a form of mental strain caused by overexposure to technology and the expectation of perpetual availability. In the Philippine context, Lapada et al. (2020) found that teachers reported digital fatigue as a result of prolonged screen time for synchronous classes, preparation of learning materials, monitoring of online submissions, and sustained communication with students and parents. These overlapping digital demands produced both physical and mental exhaustion, reflecting the intensification of teachers' responsibilities in online environments.

Mitigating these challenges requires institutional support at multiple levels. Trust and Whalen (2020) highlighted the value of sustained professional development that strengthens teachers' digital literacy and time management skills. Complementarily, Kinman et al. (2011) underscored the importance of organizational policies that set clear expectations regarding digital availability and promote balanced technology use, thereby safeguarding personal and family time. Equally critical is the cultivation of a school culture that acknowledges the realities of digital demands and actively supports teacher well-being. Such measures are essential to sustaining educators' capacity to thrive in increasingly digitalized educational environments.

Challenges in achieving work-life balance

Teachers face many challenges in finding a healthy work-life balance because of the demanding nature of their profession. As Kinman, Wray, and Strange (2011) point out, heavy workloads, time pressures, and emotional labour often leave teachers stretched thin. Their responsibilities do not end when classes finish; lesson planning, grading, and administrative work frequently spill over into evenings and weekends, leaving little time for rest, family, or personal well-being. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) similarly observed that growing accountability demands, frequent evaluations, and constant performance monitoring intensify stress levels, often leading to emotional exhaustion.

Beyond academic duties, teachers are also expected to support the behavioral and emotional needs of their students, further adding to their workload. In the Philippine context, Tarraya (2023) found that teachers often experience role overload, as they are tasked with community involvement and extracurricular supervision on top of teaching. These overlapping responsibilities make it difficult to separate professional life from personal life. Kinman et al. (2011) likewise emphasized that the emotional demands of the role—such as managing behavioral challenges or offering pastoral care—can drain teachers' energy and reduce job satisfaction.

The shift to digital education has made these challenges even more complex. Digital tools undoubtedly enhance learning, but they also blur the boundaries between home and work. Teachers often feel the pressure to remain connected, responding to messages, preparing digital lessons, and updating platforms outside of working hours (Tarafdar et al., 2017). Over time, this "always-on" expectation creates digital overload and technostress, leaving teachers with little time to recharge (Trust & Whalen, 2020). The result is fatigue, disrupted personal time, and difficulty maintaining meaningful family connections.

Cultural and institutional factors also shape teachers' experiences. In the Philippines, many teachers continue to prioritize work over personal well-being, reflecting cultural values of sacrifice and dedication to their students. Yet, as Lapada et al. (2020) found during the transition to online learning, a lack of clear policies on workload management, limited training opportunities, and insufficient mental health support amplified teacher stress and further blurred the line between work and home. These findings highlight the importance of systemic support. Promoting teachers' well-being requires more than individual coping strategies; it calls for institutions to provide fair workload management, strong leadership, and a culture that values personal balance as much as professional dedication.

Coping strategies for maintaining work-life balance

Teachers draw on a range of coping strategies to manage the demands of their profession and sustain work-life balance. One of the most consistent protective factors is social support. Kinman, Wray, and Strange (2011) found that encouragement and assistance from colleagues and school leaders help mitigate stress and emotional exhaustion. Teachers who feel supported by their peers are better equipped to handle heavy workloads and the emotional labour of the profession. In the Philippine context, Tarraya (2023) emphasized the importance of teachers actively practicing balance by managing their time and emotions, setting boundaries between personal and professional life, and continually seeking opportunities for self-improvement.

Personal and leisure activities also serve as vital outlets for recovery. Bernardo, Salanga, and Aguas (2017) reported that Filipino teachers frequently engage in church involvement, community participation, and family bonding as sources of emotional renewal and stress relief. These activities allow teachers to step away from work-related concerns and focus on their well-being. Kinman et al. (2011) further highlighted the value of psychological detachment from work during non-working hours, noting that such disengagement reduces fatigue, fosters recovery, and strengthens overall resilience.

In the digital era, technology itself has become both a challenge and a resource for coping. Trust and Whalen (2020) observed that teachers who integrate digital tools effectively—such as automated assessment systems and learning management platforms—can streamline their tasks, save time, and ease workload pressures. Yet, as Macalde, de Guzman, and Tan (2023) cautioned, efficiency gains must be balanced with boundaries on digital use. Without limits, reliance on technology can foster technostress and digital overload, ultimately undermining efforts to maintain balance.

Institutional support is equally critical in shaping teachers' coping capacities. Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, and Reinke (2018) recommend school-based mental health programs that directly address teacher well-being. They argue that professional development in stress management and social-emotional skills enhances resilience and improves instructional quality. Similarly, Kinman et al. (2011) advocate for greater professional autonomy, noting that when teachers have more control over instructional decisions and scheduling, they experience higher job satisfaction and greater ability to manage personal responsibilities effectively.

Statement of the problem

This study sought to determine the challenges faced and strategies employed by elementary school teachers in managing work-life balance in the era of digital education. Specifically, the study answered the following research questions:

1. *What are the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in managing their work-life balance in the era of digital education?*

2. *What strategies are employed by elementary school teachers to manage their work-life balance while integrating digital education in their teaching practices?*

Research methodology

This chapter presents the research design, sources of data which includes the locale of the study, population and sampling, data gathering instrument and data analysis including its ethical standards.

Research design

This study adopted a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the work-life balance experiences of elementary school teachers in the era of digital education. A descriptive phenomenological approach was employed, as this design allows for an in-depth understanding of the teachers' perspectives, challenges, and coping strategies. This approach is appropriate for exploring subjective experiences and gaining insights into how digital education affects teachers' professional and personal lives.

Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in public elementary schools in rural areas within the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. These schools were chosen due to their geographic location, limited access to digital infrastructure, and the unique challenges faced by teachers in integrating digital education into their teaching practices. The chosen setting provides valuable insight into how elementary school teachers manage their work-life balance amidst the pressures of digital education.

Population and sampling

A total of 10 elementary school teachers within the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur were purposely selected for this study. The sample size is deemed sufficient to facilitate an in-depth phenomenological analysis of both individual and collective experiences. The participants were chosen based on their direct experiences with managing work-life balance in the era of digital education, allowing a comprehensive understanding of individual experiences

Data gathering instrument

Data were gathered through an online interview questionnaire specifically designed to capture in-depth responses from elementary school teachers about the challenges they face and the strategies they use to maintain work-life balance in the era of digital education. The instrument was developed following a review of relevant literature and consultations with educational experts to ensure clarity, appropriateness, and content validity. Open-ended questions were included to encourage participants to reflect on and describe their experiences, feelings, coping mechanisms, and perceptions regarding the intersection of their professional and personal lives.

Data gathering procedure

Data collection was conducted through online questionnaires using Google Forms, which allowed teachers to respond at their convenience, ensure safety and accessibility, and allow for thoughtful,

reflective responses. Follow-up emails were sent to ensure clarifications, and participants were encouraged to provide detailed explanations in their answers. Additionally, the option to follow-up interview was also made available to gain additional insights or elaborate on initial responses.

Data analysis tool

Thematic analysis followed the six-phase framework by Braun and Clarke (2006), which was supported by NVivo software to support organizing and analyzing the qualitative data. The process started with familiarization, where the researcher thoroughly read and reread all transcribed responses to gain a deep understanding of the content. Next, initial coding identified key phrases, ideas, and responses related to challenges and strategies of elementary school teachers. Similar codes were grouped together to form broader themes. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data and were coherent across participants. Once clearly defined, themes were integrated into a detailed narrative linking findings to research questions. Additionally, inter-coder reliability was ensured through collaboration with other research experts to validate the findings and maintain consistency in the interpretation of the data.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were central to this study. All participants provided informed consent, ensuring that they fully understood the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. To protect the privacy and identities of the elementary school teachers, strict measures of confidentiality and anonymity were observed. Data were securely stored, with access restricted solely to the researcher. Recognizing that discussing work-life challenges—particularly in the context of digital education—could evoke emotional strain, the online interviews were conducted with sensitivity and respect, with avenues for support made available when needed. Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board, and all procedures adhered to established guidelines to uphold the highest ethical standards in research.

Results and discussion

This part presents findings from structured interviews conducted with elementary school teachers in Ilocos Sur, focusing on their challenge and their strategies for managing work-life balance in the era of digital education. The data is organized according to key themes identified during the interviews.

What are the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in managing their work-life balance in the era of digital education?

Table 1. Elementary school teacher's challenges in managing work-life balance in the era of digital education

Themes	Categories	F
Theme 1: Blurred boundaries between work and personal life	Overlapping work and family responsibilities	**7**
	Constant availability	**8**

Theme 2: Psychological and emotional stress	Guilt and role conflict	**7**
	Mental fatigue	**6**
	Feelings of burnout	**10**
Theme 3: Technological difficulties	Poor internet connectivity	**10**
	Lack of Adequate devices and equipment	**7**
Theme 4: Excessive workload	Multiple subject preparations	**4**
	Checking and monitoring students outputs	**6**

Theme 1: Blurred boundaries between work and personal life

The thematic analysis revealed that elementary school teachers experience difficulties in drawing clear lines between their professional responsibilities and personal lives. The integration of teaching duties into their home environment leads to overlapping roles and constant availability. The following statements by the participants illustrate these challenges:

"I struggle to detach from work during my free time since the nature of digital education frequently blurs the distinction between professional and personal life. With texts, emails, and responsibilities accessible at all times via phones or laptops, it is impossible to completely disconnect and focus on rest or family time." (P6)

"It is hard to disconnect because students, parents, and co-teachers often send messages even after working hours. There is also pressure to respond immediately, especially when the tasks are urgent or involve deadlines. (P5)

These challenges align with Sokal, Trudel, and Babb (2020), emphasizing that without clear institutional guidelines on teachers' online working house, the boundary between professional duties and personal life becomes increasingly blurred, affecting overall well-being. Kim and Asbury (2020) similarly concluded that the merging of personal and professional spheres during digital teaching increases stress levels and reduces teachers' mental health. Teachers also experience perceived obligation to be constantly available, feeling compelled to respond to students', parents', and administrators' queries at any hour to maintain professionalism and avoid complaints. Similar findings were highlighted by Klapproth et al. (2020), who found that constant availability expectations during online teaching led to emotional exhaustion.

Theme 2: Psychological and emotional stress

The analysis revealed that psychological and emotional stress is a major challenge faced by elementary school teachers in the era of digital education. Teachers reported experiencing mental fatigue and feeling of burnout due to demands of online teaching and managing personal responsibilities simultaneously. Additionally, guilt and role conflict emerged, as teachers felt they were neglecting family responsibilities

due to work demands. The following statements by the participants illustrate these psychological and emotional challenges:

"There is constant mental fatigue from switching roles—from being a teacher, then a parent or household manager. The pressure to perform well at work while also being present at home can lead to stress and guilt, especially when one role seems to get more attention than the other."(P5)

"Burnout from digital teaching feels like being tired all the time, even after resting. It's hard to focus , and you may feel stressed or upset over small things. It feels like your always working but never fully caught up." (P10)

"I feel guilty because I focus more on my work already and I feel like neglecting my family and my self needs." (P9)

The findings align with Lapada et al. (2020), highlighted that Filipino teachers in blended learning environments feel emotionally exhausted from extended working house and the demands of digital education. Additionally, this is consistent with Hadar et al. (2020), who reported that teachers experience role conflict when managing home and teaching duties simultaneously during online learning.

Theme 3: Technological difficulties

The analysis showed that technological difficulties significantly affect elementary school teacher's work-life balance in the era of digital education. One major challenge was poor internet connectivity, with teachers frequently disconnected during class, disrupting lessons and increasing stress levels. Also lack of adequate devices and equipment emerged as a category, with teachers limiting their ability to prepare interactive lessons. These technological difficulties are further illustrated by the following statements from the participants:

"If the internet is slow or unavailable, or when devices malfunction, everything is delayed. Tasks that should take an hour end up taking much longer, which eats into my personal time and creates stress. It also affects my ability to meet deadlines and be fully present at home.(P7)

"The lack of proper devices can be very time-consuming. Tasks that should take a short time end up taking hours, which eats into personal and family time."(P5)

This supports Klapproth et al. (2020), who found that unstable internet access undermines teacher' confidence and frustration. Additionally, Lapada et al. (2020) found that lack of adequate technological resources, such as reliable devices and internet access, significantly increased their workload. Teachers spent additional hours troubleshooting connectivity issues, adapting lessons to low-tech modalities, and preparing multiple versions of materials to accommodate students with limited digital access. This negatively affected teaching quality and instructional delivery.

Theme 4: Excessive workload

Excessive workload emerged as a significant challenge faced by elementary school teachers in managing their work-life balance in the era of digital education. Teachers reported the challenge of preparing for multiple subjects each day, which significantly contributes to their excessive workload. Another challenge was checking and monitoring student outputs, with teachers needing to review individual submissions, provide feedback, and record grades on multiple online systems. These challenges are further illustrated by the following statements from the participants:

"One of the biggest challenges I face, as a multi-grade teacher, are adapting curriculum for diverse learners, preparing lessons, managing time and resources, and addressing the varied needs of multiple grade levels." (P2)

"I often stayed up late checking student work , and attending virtual meetings. I was always exhausted physically and emotionally and even the simplest tasks felt heavy. It was as if I was constantly working, yet nothing ever felt truly done."(P1)

This reflects how multiple subject preparations increase teachers' cognitive load and working hours, limiting their time for family and personal rest. Similar findings were noted by Lapada et al. (2020), who emphasizes that multiple preparations intensify teachers' work demands, particularly in blended or digital teaching contexts. Kim and Asbury (2020) found that the volume of checking tasks in online learning significantly increases teacher workload and stress.

What strategies are employed by elementary school teachers to manage their work-life balance while integrating digital education in their teaching practices?

Table 2. Elementary school teacher's strategies in managing work-life balance in the era of digital education

Themes	Categories	F
Theme 1: Effective time management	Prioritizing tasks	5
	Creating daily schedules	4
	Setting time limits for tasks	7
Theme 2: Setting boundaries between work and personal life	Setting digital boundaries	5
	Avoiding work tasks during rest period	6
	Establishing fixed working hours	5
Theme 3: Seeking family support	Assistance with printing	6

	Emotional support	9
	Organizing teaching materials and supplies	5
Theme 4: Practicing self-care and stress management activities	Engaging in religious or spiritual activities	7
	Engaging in physical exercise or movement	6
	Engaging in leisure activities or hobbies	8

Theme 1: Effective time management

The thematic analysis revealed that effective time management is a key strategy employed by elementary school teachers to maintain their work-life balance in the era of digital education. Teachers highlighted various ways to organize their tasks efficiently to reduce stress and maintain productivity such as prioritizing tasks, creating daily schedules, and setting time limits for tasks. These strategies are further illustrated by the following statements from the participants:

"I make a daily schedule to plan time for both teaching and home tasks. I take short breaks during the day to rest and clear my mind. I also set limits on work time so I can spend quality time with my family.(10)

"I started using a time-blocking method where I set specific hours for teaching tasks and home responsibilities. I list my top priorities for the day and make sure to focus on those first. This helps me stay organized and avoid feeling overwhelmed."(P1)

"I've established routines, such as establishing strict work hours and making a daily to-do list, to help me keep organized and focused while juggling my teaching duties and household obligations." (P8)

This finding aligns with Aeon and Aguinis (2017), who stated that teachers who practice time management strategies, such as prioritizing urgent and important tasks, experience increased productivity and reduced job stress. Their study emphasized that setting clear goals and organizing daily activities are crucial for balancing multiple teaching responsibilities effectively. Claessens, Eerde, and Rutte, 2007, also emphasized that this strategy prevents last-minute rushes and ensures that critical duties are completed on time. Another effective practice was setting time limits for tasks to prevent overworking and fatigue. Additionally, participants emphasized allocation time for rest and self-care to maintain their physical well-being. Scheduling breaks within their day prevents burnout and ensures sustained productivity, consistent with Sokal, Trudel, and Babb (2020), who highlighted that teachers practising intentional self-care experience lower stress levels.

Theme 2: Setting boundaries between work and personal life

The analysis showed that setting boundaries between work and personal life employed by elementary school teachers to maintain work-life balance while integrating digital education. These include establishing fixing hours, avoiding work tasks during rest periods, and setting digital boundaries. The following statements by the participants illustrate these strategies:

"I set a "cut-off" time at night when I stop checking work messages."(P5)
"Once that scheduled time is over, I make a conscious effort to step away from work completely. This includes silencing my notifications, logging out of school platforms, and switching my devices to 'Do Not Disturb' mode."(P9)

"I make it a point to set clear boundaries by defining specified work hours and avoiding jobs that take longer than that. I turn off work notifications after hours to avoid distractions and focus on personal affairs."(P6)

This finding aligns with Kim and Asbury (2020), who reported that defining work and personal time boundaries reduces role conflict and improves teacher's psychological well-being. Teachers described establishing fixed working hours, where they limit teaching preparations, checking outputs, and responding to messages within set hours to avoid encroaching on their personal time. Another category was avoiding work tasks during rest periods, where teachers refrain from checking emails, responding to group chats, or preparing lessons during breaks, mealtimes, and evenings. Sokal, Trudel, and Babb (2020) noted that this strategy promotes mental recovery and prevents burnout. Finally, setting digital boundaries was highlighted, where teachers mute class group chats, limit app usage, or turn off notifications after duty hours to reduce work-related interruptions during personal time.

Theme 3: Seeking family support

The thematic analysis revealed that seeking family support is a vital strategy employed by elementary school teachers to manage their work-life balance while integrating digital education. Teachers shared that the assistance with printing, organizing teaching materials and supplies, and emotional support provided by their families enable them to cope with the increased workload and stress of online teaching. These supports are further illustrated by the following statements from the participants:

"In order to reduce my workload and foster a sense of teamwork, I try to involve my family in small activities like organizing materials or helping with printing."(P8)

"I occasionally incorporate my family in my work routine, such as helping with printing, preparing materials, or organizing classroom supplies. Their assistance not only reduces my workload, but also makes them feel more engaged to what I do as a teacher."(P6)

Their support plays a huge role in helping me maintain both my effectiveness as a teacher and my well-being as an individual.(P9)

This finding aligns with Adisa, Gbadamosi, and Osabutey (2017), who emphasized that family support plays and crucial role in reducing work-family conflict and enhancing teachers' well-being. Teachers described receiving emotional support from family members, where encouragement and understanding helped reduce stress and motivated them to continue their teaching responsibilities. This consistent with Sokal, Trudel, and Babb (2020), who found that emotional support buffers the effects of work-related stress among teachers. Additionally, some teachers described assistance with printing, and organizing teaching materials and supplies, where family members helped print, cut, and arrange modules, visual aids, and teaching materials to reduce preparation time. Klapproth et al. (2020) reported that support in instructional preparation reduces teacher workload and stress.

Theme 4: Practicing self-care and stress management activities

The thematic analysis showed that practicing self-care and stress management activities is a vital strategy employed by elementary school teachers to maintain their work-life balance in the era of digital education. Teachers shared that engaging in self-care routines and stress relief activities enables them to manage the emotional and physical demands of teaching. Participants shared their experiences:

"I devote time to prayer and reflection, which provides me with mental and emotional clarity."(P6)

"I also listen to music or do simple exercises like stretching. Sometimes, I read books or watch light shows to relax my mind after a long day."(P5)

"I find that after a long workday, routines like working out, going outside, and doing hobbies like reading or creating truly help me refuel."(P8)

"I make it a priority to spend meaningful time with my family and also carve out moments just for myself. I truly believe that nurturing these personal connections and engaging in self-care are not just optional—they are essential."(P9)

This finding aligns with Sokal, Trudel, and Babb (2020), who highlighted that teachers who intentionally practice self-care experience lower burnout and greater job satisfaction. Teacher described engaging in religious or spiritual activities, such as prayers, devotional readings or meditation, which provided them with peace, inner strength, and motivation to continue despite challenges. Kim and Asbury (2020) also emphasized that spiritual practices enhance coping among teachers facing workload stress. Another category was engaging in leisure activities or hobbies, such as watching movies or reading, which provided relaxation and enjoyment. This is consistent with Lim and Kim (2022), who reported that engaging in hobbies enhances teachers' psychological well-being. Engaging in physical exercise or movement was another strategy, including stretching, walking, or strolling to remain active and relieve tension. Klapproth et al. (2020) found that physical movement helps teachers reduce bodily fatigue from prolonged computer use.

Conclusion

This study examined how elementary school teachers in Ilocos Sur navigate the complexities of maintaining work-life balance in the era of digital education. The findings revealed that teachers encounter significant challenges, including heavy workloads, technological difficulties, blurred boundaries between professional and personal life, and heightened psychological and emotional strain. These challenges largely stem from the demands of preparing online lessons, managing multiple platforms, handling increased administrative responsibilities, and struggling to disconnect from work after class hours.

In response, teachers actively employed coping strategies to safeguard their well-being. These included practicing effective time management, setting boundaries between work and home life, creating dedicated workspaces, and seeking emotional and practical support from their families. Many also engaged in leisure, spiritual, and mindfulness activities, which served as restorative practices to counter stress and maintain resilience.

The study underscores that sustaining work-life balance is not a one-time adjustment but an ongoing process that requires conscious effort from teachers and adequate support from institutions. Strengthening professional development on digital literacy, promoting policies that clarify workload expectations, and providing psychosocial support are essential steps to ensure that teachers remain both effective in their roles and healthy in their personal lives.

Ultimately, the findings offer valuable insights for school leaders, policymakers, and teacher education programs in designing interventions that prioritize teacher well-being. Promoting a healthier balance between professional demands and personal needs is not only vital for teachers' productivity and mental health but also for ensuring the delivery of quality education in an increasingly digital learning environment.

***Authors' Contributions*:** Conceptualization, research methodology, data gathering, and data analysis were all done by the author.

***Ethical review statement*:** The research was submitted to the Ethics and Review Board and was granted permission to proceed with the study. It has no human-sensitive issues.

***Funding statement*:** The study is funded by the author.
Conflict of interest statement: *No conflict of interest*

References

Adisa, T. A., Gbadamosi, G., & Osabutey, E. L. C. (2017). What happened to the border? The role of mobile information technology devices on employees' work-life balance. *Personnel Review*, *46*(8), 1651–1671. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-08-2016-0222

Aeon, B., & Aguinis, H. (2017). It's about time: New perspectives and insights on time management. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *31*(4), 309 330. https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2016.0166)

Claessens, B. J. C., van Eerde, W., Rutte, C. G., & Roe, R. A. (2007). A review of the time management literature. *Personnel Review*, *36*(2), 255 276. https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480710726136

Kim, L. E., & Asbury, K. (2020). 'Like a rug had been pulled from under you': The impact of COVID-19 on teachers in England during the first six weeks of the UK lockdown. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *90*(4), 1062–1083. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12381

Kim, L. E., Oxley, L., & Asbury, K. (2022). "My brain feels like a browser with 100 tabs open": Teachers' mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *92*(1), 299-318. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12450

Kinman, G., Wray, S., & Strange, C. (2011). Emotional labour, burnout and work engagement in UK teachers: The role of workplace social support. *Educational Psychology*, *37*(8), 955–970.

Klapproth, F., Federkeil, L., Heinschke, F., & Jungmann, T. (2020). Teachers' experiences of stress and their coping strategies during COVID-19 induced distance teaching. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, *4*(4), 444-452. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.2020062805

König, J., Jäger-Biela, D. J., & Glutsch, N. (2020). Adapting to online teaching during COVID-19 school closures: Teacher education and teachers' professional competence. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *43*(4), 608–622. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1809650

Kunjiapu, Shamuni & Sinnappan, Punitha & Anor Salim, Farah Akmar & Kunasegaran, Mageswari. (2025). Challenges and dilemmas of digitalization in Philippine education: A grassroots perspective. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance. 14*. 232. https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v14i2.22325

Hadar, L. L., Ergas, O., Alpert, B., & Ariav, T. (2020). Rethinking teacher education in a VUCA world: Student teachers' social-emotional competencies during the COVID-19 crisis. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *43*(4), 573-586. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1807513

Herman, K. C., Hickmon-Rosa, J., & Reinke, W. M. (2018). Empirically derived profiles of teacher stress, burnout, self-efficacy, and coping and associated student outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 20*(2), 90-100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300717732066

Lapada, A. A., Miguel, F. F., Robledo, D. A., & Alam, Z. F. (2020). Teachers' COVID-19 awareness, distance learning education experiences and perceptions towards institutional readiness and challenges. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, *19*(6), 127-44. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.6.8

Singh, Y. & Gautam, D. (2024). The impact of job satisfaction on teacher mental health: A call to Action for educational policymakers. *Open Education Studies*, *6*(1), 20240008. https://doi.org/10.1515/edu-2024-0008

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2018). Job demands and job resources as predictors of teacher motivation and well-being. *Social Psychology of Education*, *21*(5), 1251–1275

Sokal, L., Trudel, L. E., & Babb, J. (2020). Supporting teachers in times of change: The job demands-resources model and teacher burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Contemporary Education*, *3*(2), 67-74. https://doi.org/10.11114/ijce.v3i2.4931

Tarafdar, M., Cooper, C. L., & Stich, J. F. (2017). The technostress trifecta – techn eustress, techno distress and design: Theoretical directions and an agenda for research. *Information Systems Journal*, *27*(5), 717-740. https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12169

Tarraya, H. (2024). Teachers' workload policy: Its impact on Philippine public school teachers. *Puissant*, *5*, 1614-1629. //puissant.stepacademic.net/puissant/article/view/246

Wahab, N. Y. A., Rahman, R. A., Mahat, H., Hudin, N. S., Ramdan, M. R., Razak, M. N. A., & Yadi, N. N. M. (2024). Impacts of workload on teachers' well-being: A ssystematic lliterature review. *TEM Journal*, 2544-2556. https://doi.org/10.18421/tem133-80

Publisher's Note: DWIJMH stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

© 2025 by the authors. Licensee DWIJMH. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities. DWIJMH is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.